

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3733

CINCLANT NORFOLK VA

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 LUANDA 0831

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI AO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH NAVY COMMANDER

1. I TALKED ON JUNE 26 WITH THE COMMANDER OF THE PORTUGUESE NAVY IN ANGOLA, REAR ADMIRAL LEONEL CARDOSO. I TOLD HIM THAT AFTER FIVE WEEKS AWAY FROM POST I NEEDED AN UPDATE ON WHAT WAS GOING ON. LONG A CAUTIOUS OPTIMIST ABOUT THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME IN ANGOLA, CARDOSO NOW HAS SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND. WE TALKED ABOUT THE NAKURU AGREEMENT, RECENT FIGHTING, COMMUNIST AID TO MPLA, THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME, PROSPECTS FOR FNLA AND MPLA, THE ATTITUDE OF THE AFM, PORTUGUESE MILITARY STRATEGY AND PREPARATIONS FOR TURNING THE NAVY OVER TO THE LIBERATION GROUPS.

2. CARDOSO SAID THE NAKURU AGREEMENT HAS CHANGED

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NOTHING; IT IS BUT WORDS, SIMILAR IN TONE AND CONTENT TO THE PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS. ALL THAT IS CONTAINED IN THE

DOCUMENT HAS BEEN SOLEMNLY AFFIRMED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. TWO FACTORS MILITATE AGAINST A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL IMPASSE: LACK OF ANY REAL DESIRE FOR AN ACCOMODATION; AND INABILITY ON THE PART OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS TO CONTROL THEIR PEOPLE. HE BELIEVES THAT WHILE MUCH OF THE FIGHTING IN RECENT MONTHS STEMMED FROM LACK OF CONTROL, THE MPLA DRIVE JUST BEFORE THE SUMMIT MEETING WAS THE RESULT OF A DECISION TO STRENGTHEN MPLA'S HAND AT THE CONFERENCE. PRIOR TO THEIR RECENT OFFENSIVE, THE MPLA HAD NO APPRECIABLE REAL ESTATE IT COULD CALL ITS OWN, WHILE BOTH FNLA AND UNITA CONTROLLED SIZEABLE AREAS. BY ITS ACTION MPLA PUT ITSELF ON A MORE EQUAL FOOTING WITH ITS RIVALS. ANOTHER GAMBIT BY MPLA, HE SAID, WAS THE ATTACK ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER SHORTLY BEFORE THE CONFERENCE OPENED. AT NAKURU ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS AGOSTINHO NETO CALLED FOR WAS THE REMOVAL OF GENERAL CARDOSO. WHEN THE MEETING CLOSED, HOWEVER, NO MENTION WAS MADE OF THIS SUBJECT. HENCE, SAID THE ADMIRAL, SOME TRADEOFF MUST HAVE BEEN MADE DURING THE MEETING, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT IT MAY HAVE BEEN.

3. CARDOSO GAVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF LACK OF CONTROL BY THE MOVEMENTS OVER THEIR SUBORDINATE ELEMENTS. AFTER MPLA DROVE FNLA BEYOND CAXITO THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES ORGANIZED AN ARMED CONVOY TO TAKE SUPPLIES TO THE NORTH. WHEN THE CONVOY REACHED CAXITO THE LOCAL COMMANDER REFUSED TO LET IT PASS. RATHER THAN OPEN FIRE, THE PORTUGUESE FLEW IN THE MPLA MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSION, IMMORTAL MONSTER, WHO SETTLED THE MATTER ON THE SPOT AND IMMEDIATELY FLEW BACK TO LUANDA. THE CONVOY PROCEEDED TWO KILOMETERS, WHERE IT WAS STOPPED BY ANOTHER MPLA ROADBLOCK, AND IT TOOK ANOTHER DAY OF HEATED DISCUSSION TO OBTAIN PERMISSION TO CONTINUE NORTHWARD. AS THE RESIDENTS OF AMBRIZ AND AMBRIZETE RECEIVE MOST OF THEIR STAPLES AND SUPPLIES FROM LUANDA, THE MPLA BLOCKADE HAS HAD A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION. WHAT IS AVAILABLE GOES TO FNLA. TO RELIEVE THE SITUATION FNLA ASKED CARDOSO TO FERRY IN SUPPLIES BY SEA. HE CONSULTED THE NATIONAL DEFENSE COMMISSION, OBTAINED THE CONSENT OF ALL PARTIES AND ON THE DAY I TALKED WITH HIM TWO SHIPS WERE PREPARING TO UNDERTAKE THE

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VOYAGE. IN ANOTHER MESSAGE I WILL DESCRIBE A ROAD TRIP I TOOK ON JUNE 25 TO CAXITO AND TO A POINT ABOUT 35 MKILOMETERS NORTH OF THE TOWN WHERE I VERIFIED THE CONTINUING MPLA BLOCKADE.

4. I ASKED ABOUT THE ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS THAT MPLA IS REPORTED TO HAVE USED IN RECENT FIGHTING. CARDOSO SAID THEY ARE EAST GERMAN VEHICLES THAT CANNOT PROPERLY BE CALLED APC'S. THEY HAVE ARMOR PLATE ON THE SIDES AND HAVE TEN POSITIONS, OR SLOTS, FROM WHICH TROOPS MAY FIRE. THEY

ALSO HAVE A MOUNT ON THE FRONT FOR A HEAVY MACHINE GUN.
THE MPLA HAS FOUR OF THE VEHICLES, WHICH WERE LANDED AT
POINTE NOIRE IN CONGO BRAZZAVILLE AND BROUGHT TO
ANGOLA BY A LANDING CRAFT CALLED THE MAIOMBE THAT HAS BEEN
USED FOR SOME TIME IN COASTWISE TRADE. THE PORTUGUESE BELIEVE
IT WAS PICKED UP BY A LOCAL SHIPPER FOR USE BY THE MPLA.

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5. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT THE LEVEL OF SOVIET AND OTHER
COMMUNIST AID TO THE MPLA, CARDOSO SAID THE PORTUGUESE DO NOT
HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF MATERIEL
DELIVERED, BUT HE BELIEVES THE MPLA IS NOW "COMFORTABLY"
WELL OFF IN TERMS OF ARMS AND MUNITIONS. HE REFERRED TO
CRITICISM OF THE PORTUGUESE FOR NOT CONTROLLING THE ENTRY OF
CLANDESTINE SHIPMENTS INTO ANGOLA. THIS IS A SORE POINT AND
HE ASKED RHETORICALLY THAT IF DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD
WHEN PORTUGAL HAD 70,000 MEN UNDER ARMS IN ANGOLA IT COULD
NOT PREVENT THE ENTRY OF ARMS AND SUPPLIES, HOW COULD IT DO
SO NOW WITH BUT 24,000 MEN.

6. I ASKED CARDOSO FOR HIS LATEST ASSESSMENT OF THE EVENTUAL SOLUTION TO THE POWER STRUGGLE. HE REPORTED A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH JONAS SAVIMBI IN WHICH THE UNITA PRESIDENT SAID THAT IF LEFT TO ITS OWN DEVICES FNLA WILL WITHER AWAY BECAUSE IT DOES NOT HAVE A LARGE ENOUGH POPULAR SECRET

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BASE AND EVEN IN ITS STRONGHOLDS MPLA HAS A GOOD DEAL OF LATENT SUPPORT. IF MPLA CONTINUES TO ATTACK FNLA, HOWEVER, AND IF PRESIDENT MOBUTU OF ZAIRE AND THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE TO AID HOLDEN ROBERTO, FNLA WILL REMAIN AN IMPORTANT ACTOR ON THE ANGOLAN STAGE. THE FNLA LEADERSHIP IS OF POOR QUALITY AND ROBERTO'S REFUSAL TO RETURN TO ANGOLA RENDERS HIM NOT ONLY INCAPABLE OF PROVIDING DIRECTION TO HIS ORGANIZATION, BUT MAKES HIM THE OBJECT OF SCORN, AS WELL. ROBERTO'S LIEUTENANTS IN ANGOLA DO NOT PROVIDE HIM WITH ACCURATE INTELLIGENCE, BUT TELL HIM WHAT THEY THINK HE WANTS TO HEAR. AS A RESULT, HE IS LIVING IN A FANTASY WORLD IN WHICH HE SEES HIMSELF AS A POWERFUL AND RESPECTED LEADER. OF THE FNLA LEADERSHIP IN ANGOLA, PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNNY EDUARDO IS LOYAL TO ROBERTO, BUT INTERIOR MINISTER NGOLA KABANGU AND INFORMATION SECRETARY HENDRICK VALL NETO SEEM TO BE CARVING OUT A POSITION THAT HAS NOT YET TAKEN SHAPE AND WHICH MAY BE ONLY THE APPEARANCE OF SETTING UP AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP. CARDOSO BELIEVES IT TO BE MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE THAT KABANGU AND VAAL NETO ARE THE MOST ASTUTE OF THE TOP FNLA LEADERS.

7. RETURNING TO MY QUESTION ABOUT THE FINAL SOLUTION, CARDOSO SAID HE BELIEVES MPLA AND UNITA WILL TAKE CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY AND THAT AFTER A PERIOD OF COOPERATION UNITA WILL MERGE WITH MPLA, CONVERTING IT BY THAT ACT INTO A DIFFERENT ORGANIZATION, ONE THAT WILL HAVE A NATIONAL BASE, WITH A STRONG TENDENCY TOWARD CONSENSUS POLITICS.

8. I FOLLOWED UP WITH A QUESTION ABOUT AGOSTINHO NETO'S POSITION IN THE MPLA. IS HE STRONGER NOW THAN BEFORE? CARDOSO BELIEVES NETO'S POSITION TO BE UNCHANGED; IN ADDITION TO THE ACTIVE REVOLT FACTION OF THE ANDRADE BROTHERS AND THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF DANIEL CHIPENDA, THERE EXISTS A RADICAL-MODERATE SCHISM ON THE ISSUE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE WITH THE OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. THE RADICALS HAVE THE UPPER HAND BECAUSE THEY CONTROL MUCH OF THE MILITARY APPARATUS. FORMER MILITARY COMMANDER IKO CARRERA, WHO HAS NOW MOVED OVER TO THE POLITICAL SIDE, AND CHIEO, THE NEW COMMANDER ARE ADVOCATES OF THE RADICAL POSITION. PRESIDENTIAL COUNCILLOR LOPO DE NASCIMENTO AND NATIONAL DEFENSE COUNCIL MEMBER SECRET

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IMMORTAL MONSTER ARE TWO OF THE LEADING ADVOCATES OF THE MODERATE FACTION. NETO IS UNABLE TO RECONCILE, PERHAPS UNWILLING TO DO SO, THE TWO GROUPS BECAUSE HE HIMSELF IS TOO INFLEXIBLE AND AUTHORITARIAN TO THINK IN TERMS OF A CONSENSUS.

9. WITH RESPECT TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT REPRESENTATIVES IN ANGOLA, CARDOSO SAID THEY ARE MODERATES BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO DEAL WITH REALITY. A MINORITY FACTION IN PORTUGAL STILL WANTS TO HELP THE MPLA, BUT THEIR POSITION HAS NO CHANCE OF ACCEPTANCE BY THE ENTIRE BODY. THE MOST THE RADICALS CAN DO IS TO GIVE MORAL SUPPORT TO THE MPLA; MATERIAL ASSISTANCE IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. MPLA RADICALS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY ANGRY OVER THE PORTUGUESE POLICY OF IMPARTIALITY AND IN THE LATEST FIGHTING TURNED ON PORTUGUESE TROOPS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. AS A RESULT OF THIS ANIMOSITY CARDOSO WENT TO LISBON THE WEEK OF JUNE 23 TO PRESENT A NEW STRATEGY THAT HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY THE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP.

10. THE NEW STRATEGY, CONTINUED CARDOSO, IS DESIGNED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF MPLA ATTACKS ON PORTUGUESE TROOPS IN ANGOLA IN THE EVENT OF RENEWED FIGHTING. AT THE PRESENT TIME TROOPS OUTSIDE LUANDA ARE SCATTERED IN SMALL UNITS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY; IN SOME LOCALITIES ONLY TWO OR THREE SOLDIERS CONSTITUTE THE PORTUGUESE PRESENCE. UNDER THE NEW STRATEGY TROOPS WILL BE CONCENTRATED IN GARRISONS IN THE LARGER TOWNS AND CITIES SO THAT THEY WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO FEND OFF AN MPLA ATTACK OR, MORE LIKELY, CONSTITUTE A DETERRENT TO MPLA AGGRESSIVENESS. THE PORTUGUESE HAVE EIGHT BATTALIONS IN AND AROUND LUANDA WITH A TOTAL OF ABOUT 10,000 MEN. LUANDA, HE SAID, CONTINUES TO BE THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY COCKPIT AND IT IS HERE THAT SERIOUS TROUBLE IS MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR. THE PORTUGUESE HAVE NOW BEGUN TO THINK SERIOUSLY OF THE NEED TO EVACUATE IN THE FACE OF WIDESPREAD FIGHTING AND MOB VIOLENCE AGAINST WHITES. IF THAT CONTINGENCY ARISES, THE NEW STRATEGY ENVISAGES A WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FORCES TO LOBITO AND LUANDA, THE ERECTION OF A PERIMETER DEFENSE TO PROTECT WHITES UNTIL THEY CAN BE EVACUATED, FOLLOWED BY THE REMOVAL OF ALL PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES. I DID NOT PURSUE THE MATTER WITH CARDOSO BECAUSE IT DID NOT APPEAR TO ME TO BE

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THE STRATEGY IS YET BACKED UP BY DETAILED PLANS.

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11. CARDOSO TOUCHED NEXT ON PORTUGUESE PLANS TO ESTABLISH AN ANGOLAN NAVY. THREE COMMANDERS, ONE FROM EACH LIBERATION MOVEMENT, HAVE BEEN APPOINTED, AND SOME 200 ANGOLANS ARE IN TRAINING AT BOA VISTA. THE TRAINEES WERE SELECTED BY THE MOVEMENTS, BUT ARE NOT ALLOWED ANY DISTINGUISHING EMBLEMS OR UNIFORMS. CARDOSO IS DISCOURAGED AT THE PROGRESS THEY ARE MAKING AND IRRITATED THAT THE THREE COMMANDERS HAVE SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN, OR APTITUDE FOR, A NAVAL CAREER. ON INDEPENDENCE DAY THE PORTUGUESE WILL TURN OVER TO THE ANGOLANS TWENTY VESSELS; FIVE PATROL BOATS OF UP TO EIGHTY FEET, SIXTEEN LARGE, MEDIUM AND SMALL LANDING CRAFT AND SEVEN SMALL PATROL BOATS. HE DID NOT SAY IT IN SO MANY WORDS, BUT HE GAVE THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT HE BELIEVES THE NEW NAVY WILL RUST OR SINK INTO OBLIVION SHORTLY AFTER THE TRANSFER OF COMMAND.

12. CARDOSO TOUCHED ON ONE ASPECT OF THE ANGOLAN SITUATION THAT HAS INTERESTED ME. WHEN THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

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ENGAGE IN BATTLE THEY DO NOT STORM THE ENEMY'S POSITION, BUT STAND OFF AND SHOOT FOR HOURS ON END. ONLY IF ONE SIDE HAS AN OVERWHELMING SUPERIORITY, SAY TWENTY OR FIFTY TO ONE, WILL IT ATTACK. IN LIGHT OF THIS CURIOUS STYLE OF WAREFARE, HE SAID, HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE WERE HEAVY CASUALTIES DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING NORTH OF LUANDA. FNLA PROBABLY WITHDREW IN GOOD ORDER AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF VOLLEYING WITH THE MPLA. IT IS ALSO THE CASE, HE ADDED THAT THE MPLA AND MOST LIKELY THE FNLA, RECOVER AND BURY THEIR DEAD IN ORDER THAT THERE NOT BE ANY EVIDENCE OF THE LOSSES SUFFERED. A TRAGIC SIDE EFFECT OF THE STAND-OFF AND SHOOT TACTICS IS A LARGE NUMBER OF DEAD AND WOUNDED CIVILIANS. THE MOVEMENTS WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH CIVILIAN CORPSES AND THE PORTUGUESE HAVE TO DON MASKS AND COLLECT THE BODIES AFTER THEY HAVE BECOME BLOATED AND CONSTITUTE A MENACE TO PUBLIC HEALTH.

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